

VZCZCXRO9789
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHTH #0347 0470734
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 160734Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8154
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000347

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER PAPANDREOU OUSTS (THE WRONG?)
CRITIC

REF: ATHENS 255

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHARLES RIES. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Just a week after its unifying "no confidence" motion against the Karamanlis government (reftel), opposition PASOK is once again roiling with internal dissention. The cause: statements by shadow FM Pangalos questioning policy that prohibits police from entering university campuses without hard-to-get permission from university officials. Some PASOKis turned on Pangalos, defending "academic sanctuary." Party leader Papandreou's response, however, merely emphasized PASOKs internal divisions; he kept the mercurial Pangalos and booted a Pangalos critic from the party's ranks. Both governing New Democracy and the media see this as another sign of Papandreou's weak hold on the fractious party. Within PASOK, both pro- and anti-Papandreou factions predict major changes in the party after elections. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Last week, PASOKis were still applauding opposition leader George Papandreou's unifying challenge to the government and decision to oppose current legislation on education reform -- an issue which had divided the party. But the flash of unity was broken on Sunday when former FM (and "Shadow FM") Pangalos publicly questioned long-standing legal protection of "academic sanctuary," which prohibits police from pursuing criminal suspects onto university campuses. On live radio, Pangalos announced it was time that police were allowed to enter campuses to combat a rampant anarchist presence and wanton destruction. In doing so, he echoed views also held by governing New Democracy officials. He also announced that he would vote for certain for the ND-proposed educational reforms, despite the official PASOK position of abstaining from the debate and vote.

¶3. (C) While Pangalos may merely have been articulating the frustration felt by many across the political spectrum, his statement amounted to a reversal of PASOK policy. Veteran PASOK MP Kimon Koulouris decided that Papandreou's quiet talk with Pangalos was not enough punishment; he unleashed a verbal attack on Pangalos that was vitriolic even by Greek standards. Koulouris claimed Pangalos had insulted former PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou (George's father). He also claimed that Pangalos, as FM under Andreas' successor Kostas Simitis, "shamed" Greece over the Ocalan affair in 1999. In response, George removed Koulouris, his father's defender, from PASOK party ranks.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: As one PASOK MP admitted, no one controls the senior statesman Pangalos. Papandreou's removal of Koulouris -- while issuing only a verbal rebuke to Pangalos -- is a clear admission that he doesn't, either. PASOK members are privately pressing Papandreou to "keep the house in order" or risk electoral defeat. With polls giving New Democracy a two-to-four point lead, negative perceptions of Papandreou's leadership ability could make the difference. One PASOK source tells us that the "shadow minister" lineup

(which includes Pangalos) likely does not reflect Papandreou's real post-election choices -- implying that some of the "old guard" might be by-passed for a more modern lineup. That's the optimistic version. Another former PASOK minister has told us he expects "big changes" after the elections but adds:"It's going to be messy."

RIES